

Wetlands and people

Surveys show that about 99% of South Dakotans enjoy wildlife-related recreation.

On average, about 99,000 South Dakotans hunt annually, and another 48,000 nonresidents come to the state to hunt each year. Over one fourth hunt ducks and geese.

South Dakotans spend over \$80 million on hunting each year, and nonresidents contribute another \$25 million to the state's economy in hunting-related travel expenses. A recent national survey showed that wildlife-related recreation contributed over \$231,000,000 to South Dakota's economy in a single year.

Throughout the cold months, when furs are prime, trapping is an important source of income for many South Dakota families. Main furbearers trapped in wetlands include muskrats, mink, raccoons, and beaver. Foxes and coyotes also inhabit wetlands during the winter.

South Dakota trappers and predator hunters recently took over \$500,000 in furs during a single season. The average annual harvest is over 30,000 muskrats, 22,000 raccoons, and 3,000 mink.

An increasing number of people also enjoy "nonconsumptive" wildlife recreation. About

228,000 South Dakotans over age 16—or 43% of the population—view, photograph, and feed wildlife. To do that, they spend about \$40 million per year for equipment, feed, and travel.

Some landowners sell hay from wetlands to supplement their incomes, or they harvest wetland hay to feed to their own livestock, particularly during drought years.

Wetland hay is valuable. Yields may be more than twice as high as typical upland grass stands, and forage quality is often comparable to native and tame grass, but lower than alfalfa. Wetlands on eastern South Dakota farms may produce from 2 to 12 tons of hay/acre. Wetlands can be managed for forage production without losing their other values.

Wholesale and retail sales of minnows in South Dakota total about \$2 million each year. In neighboring Minnesota, the retail value of fathead minnows in some years is over \$12 million. Many of these are captured in South Dakota. Fathead minnows are sold throughout the U.S. under the name "*South Dakota Toughies*" because of their ability to withstand long-distance travel to bait dealers.



Bait minnows harvested from wetlands

Left: Labrador retriever with a green-winged teal



Grazing wetlands benefits both agriculture and some wildlife